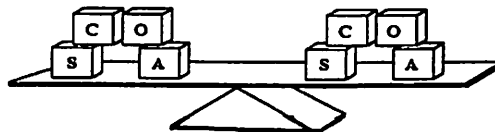


Admit To Ourselves



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STEP FIVE

STEP FIVE: *"Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."*

Step Five and Step Four have been interwoven in my experience. My Fourth Step inventory was done orally, a group was listening, and it happened weekly for a period of about two years. I also consider this experience to be the completion of the part of the Fifth Step that states "...admitted to ourselves and another human being...". (Most people I know do the Fourth Step according to a written format and then read this inventory to their sponsor.) In sharing my Step Five process I feel fear. I'm not following the rules! I am comforted and relieved to remember the Twelve Steps were written as suggestions. The way I experienced Step Five worked for me.

I feel lucky I could become sober in the area of co-sexual addiction using the process that was best for me. In my family of origin part of the covert sexual abuse was complete lack of privacy. There was no door that could be shut, there was no drawer that could be closed, no thought that could be my own and no diary that could be locked. This affected me to the point I was not comfortable putting any secrets "in writing." So I broke the "no talk" rule through (many) conversations with (many) people and in (many) meetings which I learned to trust.

In addition to admitting to myself (my insights & awarenesses) and admitting to another human being

(breaking the "no talk rule"), there is another important part to Step Five: **admitting to God.** This is a process in my recovery which I am still developing. I feel excited about growing more and more in my personal relationship with my higher power.

My in depth work in Step Five helped reduce the shame I carried growing up in a family where relationships, attitude toward life, and respect for myself and others were warped and dysfunctional. As I reduce my shame I can be my real self; I can be with you, myself, and my higher power, no hiding and no presenting a false front to try to be pleasing.

I believe I can gain great personal power and infinite transformational power when I am in a completely honest relationship with God.

Lisa Mc.

Literature Committee

New Literature Item

The Newcomer's Welcome Packet is a new piece of COSA approved literature; some of you who have heard of it previously will be glad to know that it's now available. This COSA packet is designed with the newcomer in mind, and would also be a handy reference for any member. Here are some of the contents:

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BALANCE

"Balance" is a Monthly Newsletter.

To Subscribe send \$12.00 for 12 issues to:

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NSO-COSA
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HOUSTON, TEXAS 77024

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A COSA member's thoughts about boundaries, sobriety and bottom lines:

Every 12 step program is based on the idea that members have a spiritual disease, and a spiritual solution is required. I discovered early in the program that my acting-out behaviors are my way to medicate or try to cure a spiritual problem without spiritual help. I can now see how truly destructive these acting-out behaviors are to both my family and myself.

One of my first tasks is to determine, specifically, what my codependent, acting-out behaviors are. Then I can clearly see when I began to use these destructive tools (behaviors) again. For some fellowships, identifying the destructive tools is easy. In AA the medication is drinking; in NA it is drugs, etc. COSA, on the other hand, like OA and SAA, allows each member to determine what behaviors (or thoughts) constitute acting-out, for him/herself. This list of acting-out behaviors is known as my *bottom line*.

For me, the bottom line is trying to control other's behaviors or feelings, especially their feelings about me. It is important that I am clear with both my sponsor and my home group what my bottom line behaviors are, and that I share with someone every time I act out or "slip". By sharing my slip with another program

member, I break the secret, drop the shame, and am able to build more intimate relationships with other members of my fellowship. It also forces me to be rigorously honest with myself. When I make exceptions, in terms of owning slips, invariably my spiritual growth slows and I see a marked decrease in my serenity.

Once a bottom line is clearly defined, it is helpful to determine what kinds of situations, actions, and thoughts tend to directly precede a slip. If I ignore these danger signals, they are liable to lead me right back into the craziness. The solution is to decide on specific actions that I will take when I become aware of one of these situations, actions, or thoughts. These are called boundaries. Although crossing boundaries doesn't always lead to a slip, the process of thinking them through and writing them down helps us to make healthy choices in avoiding "slippery" areas, and rings an alarm whenever we do cross over boundaries.

I need to be careful when I set a boundary, I need to specify boundaries for ME. It does no good, and frequently harm, when I try to set a boundary around someone else's behavior. I need to be able to enforce my boundary whether or not the other person cooperates. For example, one of my boundaries is that I will not listen to my partner when he chooses to discuss work-related

conflicts. When I do listen, it frequently leads to me obsessing about how I can try to change his behavior or fix the situation. This doesn't mean that my partner has to stop telling me about his job (although he may choose to if I share this boundary with him). It does mean that I need to take care of myself; I can leave the room, ask to speak about something else, put on headphones, etc.

I do not need to share my boundaries with anyone outside my program, but if I want to build a relationship with someone, it is often helpful to share boundaries when issues pertaining to them come up. Most importantly, in keeping with my bottom line, I need to center my boundaries around taking care of myself, not around changing others' behavior. I am the only person who can cross my boundaries.

I have boundaries around social, sexual, work, family and 12 step meeting situations. I also have boundaries for myself around certain people. All of my boundaries have grown out of the pain of slips. After I have owned and discussed a slip with another program person, it is usually easy to see what led to the slip, and I can create (or reaffirm) a boundary that will help me avoid a slip in that area next time.

It is important to my program to keep track of time free from

[cont'd p. 3]

A COSA member . . .

acting-out behavior: what I call "sober" time. Sobriety from codependent behaviors leads to serenity and encourages spiritual growth (via the 12 steps), I believe unless I actually keep track of slips, I will not remain focused on the solution. Keeping track of sober time helps me see tangible progress as I recover. It also helps me avoid slips. If I have a week sober and I am tempted to try and control someone, I may be able to say, "I've worked too hard for this week's sobriety; I'm not going to give it up for a situation like this".

Take what you like and leave the rest. Anonymous

Convention News**"I'm Packing My Bags!"**

Well it's May... seems like I've been planning for this convention for two years. I feel excited and scared at the same time!

I *have* decided I am going to attend the convention. I've decided to stay at the hotel and I've confirmed my reservations. I don't have an airline ticket since the hotel is only an hour from my house. I have made arrangements for my daughter to be taken care of and I've arranged my schedule to have Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday off. I think that is everything except the actual packing of my bags. Packing is a detail I give thought to because I use my clothes to enhance my confidence.

My goal at the convention is to feel good about myself. In the past that had more to do with being alluring and seeking attention than feeling good about myself, for myself. Today "feeling good" means I have confidence, self assurance and am comfortable with myself. It seems some people feel comfortable any time, in any type of clothing. I have often envied them; they seem so free. In recovery though I realize I don't want that kind of freedom. My body is something I have come to love and respect and I want to protect and enhance it. I have a few simple "rules" regarding the clothing going on my body that I try to follow. They take time and I believe the time is worth it for my self esteem. (A point I'd like to add here is; any kind of thought given to boundaries and personal confidence is good to do - it doesn't have to be centered around clothes.)

As I write about these things I start negative self talk in my head. It says:

"That's so surface, is that all you can think about ... what you look like? If people judge you by your clothes who cares about them? This is the dumbest column ever." I'm just going to have to shut off that voice and continue writing about what has helped me.

Here are my thoughts on each of my "rules".

1) *Iron my clothes.*

What a hassle, especially when I'm traveling! It is a hassle and I can say I've *never* regretted ironing. I *do* regret when I *don't* iron. Even though my clothes usually aren't new - I feel better knowing I've done my best to have them clean and pressed.

2) *Wear nothing that is tight, plunging, revealing or restricts my movements.*

I've worked a lot on this one. In my disease, being noticed was uppermost in my mind. I would obsess about how I wanted everyone to turn and look at me when I walked in a room - long flowing hair - clinging draperies that revealed all the right curves - *stunning*. I realized after a few years in recovery that this was **objectifying myself (and asking others to do it too)**. Today I don't obsess on what others think of my appearance - I concern myself with what *I* think of my appearance. I want to feel comfortable in my clothes. It's important to my mental and physical health.

3) *Wear shoes that fit the circumstances.*

Maybe I should stop at *wear shoes that fit*, that was certainly my problem for a long time. I would buy shoes that were the size I wore in high school and college, never bothering to figure out why my feet hurt all the time. The fact is my feet have grown 2 whole sizes. Once I accepted this my road to "foot recovery" was underway.

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Convention News [cont'd. from p. 3]

still today I have some shoes that are mostly for sitting and looking pretty, and some shoes that are for walking and sightseeing. I no longer let vanity decide which shoes I wear. I think about what I will be doing during the day and try to make my selection based on this practical information. (I'm not always perfect at this)

4) Wear colors that enhance my skin tone. I know, I know, this brings up the idea that everyone has to "go get their colors done" by one of those professionals that smiles a lot. That might be an option for some but I've never done that. I did sit down one day with my Mother and sister and we all decided (with the aid of a library book) what "season" we were. It was fun and gave me some useful information about myself. I do feel better about myself when I look healthy and alive. The whole idea behind color analysis is to find and wear the colors that bring out my own natural skin vibrancy. The overall result is a much more healthy looking me!

These are the principles that work for me; I support you in making up your own "rules" for dressing (and packing) and I'm looking forward to seeing you at the convention! Robyn M.

Literature Committee [cont'd. from p. 1] Here are some of the Newcomer's Welcome Packet Contents:

- What is Codependency?
- Codependency of Sex Addiction
- COSA's 12 Steps & 12 Traditions
- Letting Go
- Sobriety
- Guide for Steps 1, 2 & 3

Groups may choose to give or resell the packet to newcomers, or add it to the group library. The National Service Organization (NSO) of COSA asks all groups to replace old style newcomer packets with the new packet for the following reasons:

- The new packet is attractive and gives the newcomer a favorable first impression.
-The packets content has been approved by the NSO and the group delegates.
-Consistency of newcomer packet information reaffirms COSA's national identity.
-Proceeds from the sale of literature support

the work of COSA's National Service Office.

Each packet is bound and has a front cover and back cover. This packet can be ordered from the Literature Committee by sending \$3.00/each packet to:

COSA LITERATURE
9337 B KATY FRWY #142
HOUSTON, TX 77024

Make checks payable to COSA National Service Office.

Ruth B.

Pen Pals are Needed

The communications committee is asking for volunteers who wish to do service work by writing to someone who is in an area without meetings. If you are interested in being a long distance pen pal, please write to:

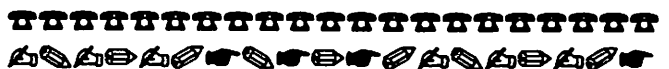
P.O. Box 502
Mt. Morris, Michigan 48458

Please consider this service work. I remember how lonely I felt before I had group support. An occasional letter or card brings so much support and hope to those with no support network. Please announce this need for service work at your meetings.

Thank you, Jo D. and Dana J.

Send contributions to support your NSO-COSA to:
NSO-COSA
9337-B KATY FREEWAY #142
HOUSTON TX 77024

National CoSA Phone Line
Phone 612/537-6904



SEND EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE AND SUBMISSIONS TO:
BALANCE EDITORIAL
9337-B KATY FRWY #142
HOUSTON, TX 77024

Many people on the mailing list are in an area where no meetings are available. This newsletter is their only contact with recovering people. Share your story. Share your recovery. Share the tools that work for you. Share your gifts.

THE BALANCE NEWSLETTER IS YOUR NEWSLETTER. SHARINGS FROM YOU CONTINUE THE PURPOSE OF THIS NEWSLETTER AS A COMMUNICATION LINK TO STRENGTHEN AND CONNECT COSA SUPPORT GROUPS AND ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE STILL STRUGGLING ALONE.

Share with other readers about your new meetings, retreats, social activities, meeting experiences, life experiences.



The address for the E-mail Forum for Friends and Family Members of People Addicted to Sex is: willing@netpath.net (this address is for those interested in inquiring or becoming a part of the support group.) This list is closed for the group's safety. It is for people in COSA, S-Anon, Co-SLAA or those with no meeting they can attend.

Ruth B.